

**UTAH
WILDLAND FIRE PREVENTION & EDUCATION TEAM
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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WEEKEND RAIN OFFERS LITTLE RELIEF FROM FIRE DANGER

Salt Lake City --- Although Utah had some rain this past weekend, this summer's fire danger is far from over. Monsoonal rains left varying amounts of moisture across the state, but it was simply not enough to relieve the existing drought nor reduce the severe fire danger. Federal and state fire managers are urging people not to become complacent about fire prevention and to continue to comply with the fire restrictions now in effect.

"It is natural for people to have less concern about wildfires after it rains. However, fuels like grass and other vegetation dry out quickly, increasing the chance for ignitions. We urge everyone to remain vigilant and do their part to prevent wildland fires," said Rich Olsen, leader of the Utah Interagency Fire Prevention and Education Team operating out of Salt Lake City.

A drying trend with temperatures reaching the 90's is forecast for the next few days. When the temperatures rise and humidity goes down, wildland vegetation loses moisture and becomes increasingly vulnerable to fire ignitions.

"Our team is saturating Utah with messages about fire restrictions that remain in effect and distributing information about human activities that may cause wildfires. It is not just the commonly known causes like matches, fireworks and unattended campfires that can start a blaze; vehicles and machinery can also be the culprit. People need to make sure their Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV's) and equipment with internal combustible engines (other than passenger vehicles) have well functioning spark arresters installed. Vehicles parked over dry vegetation can easily start a fire with hot manifolds and mufflers," said Olsen.

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“We need to take care of the wildlands. Under drought conditions, vegetation, soil, watersheds, and wildlife are especially vulnerable. Wildland fire and human activities like trampling, overgrazing and excessive use causes dry soils to loosen, disturbs drainages and can lead to erosion, weed infestation and even dust storms. Vehicle travel and hiking should be done on designated roads and trails to protect drought-affected environments,” Olsen said.

The Utah Wildland Fire Prevention and Education Team will complete its mission on August 11.

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For more information on ecological impacts of drought and wildland fire on Utah’s wildlands, contact A.J. Martinez: a._j._martinez@blm.gov